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Bulletin

Title: Treasury Offset Program

Number: 98-302

Date: April 8, 1998

Expiration: April 8, 1999

Originating Office: Financial Management Division, AFM/ARS

Distribution: All REE Employees (Please distribute to employees who do not have access to E-Mail)

Note: Please save as a Word Perfect document.

This bulletin provides information on the Federal Government's Treasury Offset Program (TOP) and the potential effect on Research, Education, and Economics (REE) employees.

The Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996, and subsequent Executive Order, requires that disbursing officials of the Department of the Treasury and other Federal disbursing officials offset Federal payments to collect "non-tax" delinquent debts owed to the United States. The Secretary of the Treasury has recently initiated a program to collect delinquent debts with primary emphasis on past-due child support. Other categories of delinquent debts may include such things as repayment of outstanding education or farm loans or amounts due states.

The USDA National Finance Center recently published Bulletin 98-2, dated March 12, 1998, providing guidance on Treasury's new program. The implementation date of April 1, 1998 has been revised to April 15, 1998.

In summary, the Department of Treasury reserves the right to withhold Federal employees' travel advance and/or travel voucher payments as offsets to delinquent debts. Treasury will notify employees of all offsets made.

In the event a Treasury offset occurs, REE employees will not be relieved or excused from settling outstanding travel expenses with their employing agency or American Express.

For example: Travel advances requested by employees which are subsequently withheld through the Treasury Offset Program will still be considered "outstanding travel advances" and must be repaid by the employee to the employing agency. Failure to settle outstanding travel advances will result in payroll deductions to recover the amount of advance due. Similar situations may occur with travel voucher payments. Employees submitting travel claims after completion of official travel may have the amount of their travel reimbursement withheld by Treasury. In the event Treasury withholds travel payment, employees will still be required to settle all outstanding travel costs with their employing agency or American Express. Failure to settle with American Express or the employing agency may result in suspension of the American Express Travel card, intervention by private collection agencies to collect outstanding debts due American Express or disciplinary action by the employing agency.

Additional information will be provided as available.

Background information pertaining to the TOP may be obtained at the NFC home page (www.NFC.USDA.GOV) or through the Department of Treasury on <http://www.fms.treas.gov/debt/dmsuppt.txt> and <http://www.fms.treas.gov/debt/dmtop.txt>.

/s/

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